18/04/2022

Homily of Archbishop Elpidophoros for Palm Sunday



Beloved in Christ,

Today, the Assembly of the Orthodox celebrates with great joy and thanksgiving, as we behold our King – the King of Kings – coming to us, to the Holy City of Jerusalem, to conquer death, the greatest enemy of all.

The Prophet Zechariah saw this moment centuries before it ever happened and cried aloud:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, humble and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.[*]

This is the truth of the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is not a king like any other. As He will tell Pontius Pilate in just a few days, “My Kingdom is not of this world.” [†] And in coming to the Holy City on a donkey, the Lord shows that the

conquest He offers is not of earthly realms, but the conquest of the human heart.

This is the meaning for us, Orthodox Christians, as we face Holy Week. But when we look around the world, we see war being waged by Orthodox against Orthodox. The tragedy and the horror taking place in Ukraine are the exact opposite of what the Church should be blessing. We see earthly glory being sought by those who condone this barbaric war.

But the Lord Jesus? He renounces power and glory and honor – which are rightfully His – as He enters Jerusalem on this Sunday of the Palms. Even as the people cried aloud: Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest![‡]

Yes, the Lord is the King of Kings, but He wears no crown. Not until the Roman soldiers plait a Crown of Thorns and push it onto His sacred head, where it will run with His Most Precious Blood.

The Lord is the King of Kings, but He is not mounted in a magnificent chariot, adorned with bejeweled armor and exquisite horses. The people saw a donkey, a beast of burden, and they did not understand that they were – that we are – the burden that the Lord has come to liberate.

Indeed, the Lord is the King of Kings, and can command Twelve Legions of Angels, as He will tell His Disciples a few days hence, in the Garden of Gethsemane.[§] But of a truth, He cannot even convince those Twelve to stand with Him in that most pressing moment. One betrays Him. Another denies Him. And they all desert Him. What kind of an army is that for a King?

My beloved Christians,

Today, our Western Christian Brothers and Sisters are celebrating Easter – and we wish them every joy. But we are not there yet. We have only just arrived in Jerusalem to accompany the Lord all the way to Golgotha and the Garden Tomb. We must decide for ourselves how we will accompany Jesus on His way to the Cross.

Will we only come for the commotion? For the Glorious Entry into Jerusalem? He is telling us even now – His reign, His kingdom, is the Kingdom of Love, of the human heart, of the core of creation.

He is coming to us with such great humility that no human being should ever exalt themselves, no matter who they think they are, or what they think they possess, or what people tell them about themselves.

The Humility of God is the Exaltation of our Humanity. Let us embrace it with all our

hearts, and allow the outpouring of His love for us this Holy Week to transform our lives.

He comes to us meekly, with mildness and gentleness. And even though the cruelest violence with be wreaked upon Him, His love will never fail to forgive us, to redeem us, to save us and to bring us into His Heavenly Kingdom, where He reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and always, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Καλή Δύναμη, καὶ Καλή Ἀνάσταση!

[*] Zechariah 9.9.

[†] John 18:36.

[‡] Matthew 21:9.

[§] Matthew 26:53.
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